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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TEGUCIGALPA 000135

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [HO](#)
SUBJECT: USG DELEGATION TO INAUGURATION MEETS WITH
PRESIDENT ZELAYA

REF: TEGUCIGALPA 96

Classified By: AMBASSADOR HUGO LLORENS FOR REASONS 1.4 (b/d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Assistant Secretary (A/S) for Western Hemisphere Affairs (WHA) Arturo Valenzuela, Ambassador Llorens, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary (PDAS) for Western Hemisphere Affairs Craig Kelly, the Ambassador, and Executive Assistant to the WHA A/S Juan Gonzalez met with President Jose Manuel "Mel" Zelaya at the Brazilian Embassy on January 26, the day before he departed Honduras with Dominican Republic President Leonel Fernandez. Brazilian Charge d'Affaires Francisco Catunda also attended the meeting. Zelaya thanked the Ambassador for his efforts to attempt to avert the coup, and for protecting his wife and son. Zelaya said the Honduran crisis had complicated international relations in the Americas. He also said there will be no reconciliation among Hondurans unless they learn to debate ideas peacefully. A/S Valenzuela told Zelaya that the U.S. has always been committed to the defense of Honduran democracy, but that the U.S. also wants Honduras to move forward and have a better future. He encouraged Zelaya to play a constructive role in Honduras' future. Zelaya promised to try to help and said the U.S. could count on him.

Brazilian Charge Catunda thanked the U.S. for its staunch support over many months for their Embassy and staff. Catunda cited our effort to ensure that regime authorities provided water, electricity, and allowed daily shipments of food to those residing inside the chancery compound. End Summary

¶2. (C) WHA A/S Arturo Valenzuela, WHA PDAS Craig Kelly, and Executive Assistant to the WHA A/S Juan Gonzalez, accompanied by the Ambassador, met with President Jose Manuel "Mel" Zelaya at the Brazilian Embassy on January 26 during their trip to Honduras to attend the inauguration of President Porfirio Lobo. President Zelaya was accompanied by First Lady Iris Xiomara Castro Zelaya, advisor Rasel Tome, and his negotiators to the Guaymuras dialogue that resulted in the Tegucigalpa-San Jose Accord: Victor Meza, Rodil Rivera, and Mayra Mejia. Brazilian Charge d'Affaires Francisco Catunda also attended the meeting. President Zelaya expressed his appreciation to the Ambassador for the Ambassador's efforts to attempt to avert the Honduran political crisis and thanked him for allowing Zelaya's immediate family to stay at the Residence in the days following the June 28 coup d'etat, saying that the Ambassador had "saved their lives." President Zelaya expressed his appreciation to President Obama and the Secretary for their support and for sending him Christmas cards. Brazilian Charge Catunda thanked the U.S. for its staunch support over many months for their Embassy and staff. Catunda cited our effort to ensure that regime

authorities provided water, electricity, and allowed daily shipments of food to those residing inside the chancery compound.

13. (C) WHA A/S Valenzuela told President Zelaya that the Honduran political crisis was a tragedy for Honduras and for the Americas. A/S Valenzuela stated that military action to solve political problems is unacceptable and that democratic problems are not solved by undemocratic means. A/S Valenzuela said the U.S. remained committed to its principled stance calling for restoration of the constitutional order in Honduras, but also needed to be practical and wanted Honduras to move forward and to help it have a better future. A/S Valenzuela stated that democratic institutions need to be strengthened through policies on behalf of the people. A/S Valenzuela said there must be answers to the poverty and inequality that exists in the Americas, but that the key is institutions rather than people promoting opulence and personal agendas. A/S Valenzuela told President Zelaya that he hoped that Zelaya would be able to depart Honduras on January 27, as scheduled. A/S Valenzuela also told Zelaya that Zelaya can play a role in Honduras' future. Zelaya promised to try to help and said the U.S. could count on him.

Regarding a truth commission, Zelaya said it would have to be under the auspices of the international community. He added that the findings of the truth commission would give his successor, President Porfirio Lobo, the strength to effect change.

14. (C) President Zelaya told the U.S. delegation that Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez had helped Honduras and had

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never requested anything in return, adding that discounted Venezuelan oil was an attraction. Zelaya pointed out that the National Congress approved the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA) treaty while de facto regime leader Roberto Micheletti was President of Congress. Zelaya stated that he had consulted with the United States before joining ALBA. Zelaya said he always enjoyed excellent relations with the United States, but that friction arose early in his Administration due to his policies towards oil companies. President Zelaya said there will be no reconciliation among Hondurans unless they learn to debate ideas peacefully. He also said the Honduran state requires reform. Zelaya stated that the Organization of American States' Democratic Charter should have a paragraph added to it requiring action in the case of a coup d'etat.

15. (C) President Zelaya said that the more radical elements of the anti-coup resistance movement have called for violence, but that he does not accept that. He said the resistance needs to be transformed into a force with which the government must engage in dialogue. Zelaya explained that Lobo had agreed to engage in dialogue individually with the approximately fifty organizations that make up the resistance movement, but was not willing to enter into discussions with them together as a group, which is what the resistance seeks. Zelaya responded affirmatively when WHA A/S Valenzuela asked him if he would stay in the Liberal political party.

16. (C) The Ambassador wished President Zelaya a safe trip to the Dominican Republic and told him he had endured his stay in the Brazilian Embassy well. The Ambassador said that the most difficult challenge ahead would be strengthening the truth commission so that it fosters a stronger democracy to ensure that a coup d'etat never occurs again. The Ambassador told President Zelaya that he has an opportunity to play a constructive role in supporting the new government and helping promote national reconciliation in Honduras, noting that the crisis has changed the Honduran nation.

LLORENS